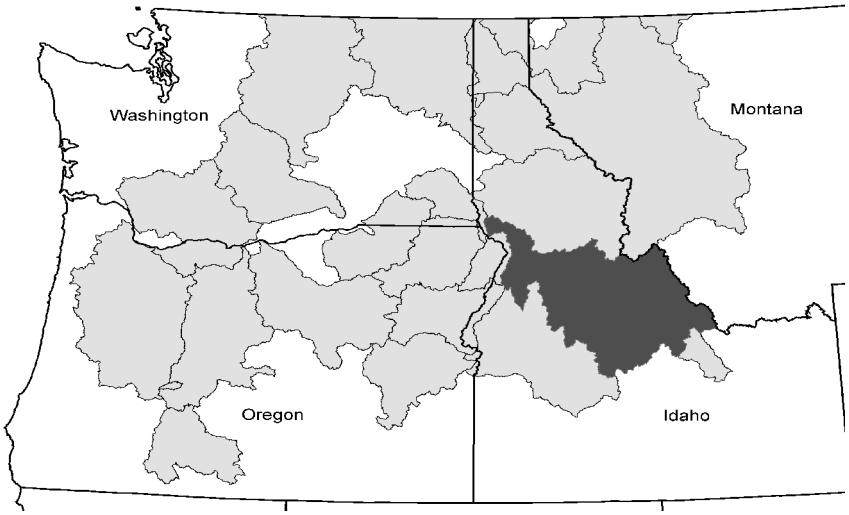
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Bull Trout Draft Recovery Plan

and proposed Critical Habitat

Salmon River Recovery Unit

(CHAPTER 17)



What areas are included in the Salmon River Recovery Unit?
The Salmon River Recovery Unit encompasses the entire Salmon River basin and lies in central Idaho. The area extends from the Idaho/Montana border on the east to the Snake River on the Idaho/Washington border on the west. The Salmon River flows north and west through central Idaho to join the Snake River in lower Hells Canyon. Major tributaries to the Salmon River include: Yankee Fork Salmon River, East Fork Salmon River, Lemhi River, Pahsimeroi River, North Fork Salmon River, Panther Creek, Middle Fork Salmon River, South Fork Salmon River and Little Salmon River.

How much of the area is proposed as critical habitat?
About 4,777 miles of streams are proposed for critical habitat in the Salmon River Recovery Unit. This is approximately 25 percent of the waters in the entire recovery unit.

Who developed the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan and critical habitat proposal?
The draft recovery plan for bull trout range-wide was developed through the collaboration of Federal, State, Tribal and private biologists working with representatives of local watersheds, private land-owners and industry and conservation organizations. A total of 24 recovery unit teams contributed to the development of the current draft recovery plan. These recovery unit teams included experts in biology, hydrology and forestry, as well as natural resource users and stakeholders with interest and knowledge of bull trout and the habitats they depend on for survival. The critical habitat proposal was based in large part on information developed by the recovery unit teams and supplemented with even more recent information on the current distribution and habitat characteristics of the species.

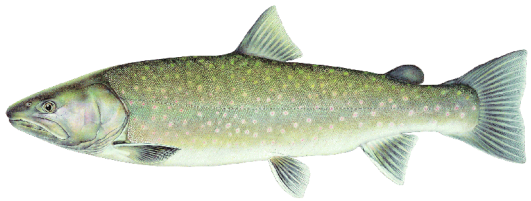
What is the relationship between the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan and the critical habitat proposal?
The draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal are closely linked. The information developed

by the recovery unit teams, and the science underlying that information, are the basis for the critical habitat proposals. However, critical habitat is designed to provide for the conservation of a species by identifying those areas essential for conservation and requiring special management, whereas a recovery plan is a much larger blueprint providing guidance for the eventual recovery and de-listing of a species.

Who would be affected by recovery efforts and a critical habitat designation?
A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority. It is the Fish and Wildlife Service's estimation of the actions necessary for the recovery of the species. Agencies, communities or individuals are encouraged to take voluntary actions described in the recovery plan to benefit bull trout.

The primary effect of a critical habitat designation is that Federal agencies are required to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service on actions they carry out, fund, or authorize that might affect critical habitat. It is important to note that in most cases, this is already occurring under the section 7 interagency consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Non-Federal entities, including private landowners, that may also be affected could include, for example, those seeking a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit under the Clean Water Act to build an in-water structure, those seeking Federal approval to discharge effluent into the aquatic environment, or those seeking Federal funding to implement private property improvements, where such actions affect the aquatic environment that has been designated as critical habitat. But again, in most cases where this link between activities on private lands and Federal funding, permitting, or authorization exists, consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is already occurring.

A critical habitat designation does not have any effect on non-Federal entities when there is not a Federal nexus. For example, swimming, boating, fishing, farming, ranching, or any of a range of activities normally conducted by a landowner or operator of a business not involving Federal funding, permitting, or authorization in order to occur would not be affected.



How was the draft recovery plan for each recovery unit developed?
Recovery units were delineated based on the biology of the species and considerations for paralleling existing state conservation and fisheries management frameworks wherever possible.

Recovery teams incorporated existing state conservation processes to the degree possible, depending on the degree to which they had been developed (for example, the Montana Bull Trout Restoration Plan, the State of Idaho's Bull Trout Conservation Plan, the State of Washington's Statewide Strategy to Recover Salmon and the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds).

What is the status of bull trout in the Salmon River Recovery Unit?
The status of bull trout in the Salmon River Unit is unknown. Comprehensive data do not exist on bull

trout abundance through time

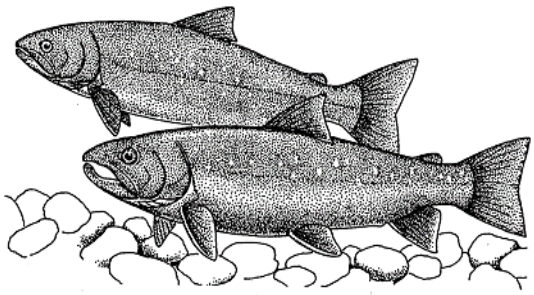
in most of the recovery

unit. In the past, emphasis on data collection within the unit has been on anadromous fish.

However, bull trout are well distributed throughout most of the unit. There are 125 identified local populations located within 10 core areas. Distribution data for bull trout in the Salmon River Recovery Unit come primarily from presence/absence surveys and basin-wide surveys.

What are the threats to bull trout in the Salmon River Recovery Unit?

Threats to bull trout in the Salmon River Recovery Unit include: Water diversions, forest management practices, road construction, road maintenance and use, livestock grazing, agriculture, mining, fisheries management, nonnative species competition, and urban and rural development.What are the recovery goals and objectives?



The goal of the bull trout recovery plan is to ensure the long-term persistence of self-sustaining, complex interacting groups of bull trout distributed across the species' range so that the species can be delisted. To recover bull trout in the Salmon River Recovery Unit, the following objectives have been identified:

Maintain current distribution of bull trout and restore distribution in previously occupied areas within the Salmon River Recovery Unit.

- Maintain stable or increasing trends in abundance of bull trout within the Recovery Unit.
- Restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions for all bull trout life history stages and strategies.
- Conserve genetic diversity and provide opportunity for genetic exchange.

What are the criteria for measuring recovery?

Recovery will be measured according to four criteria: distribution, abundance, population trends and connectivity in the watershed. The Salmon River Recovery Unit includes specific, quantifiable standards for each of these criteria.

- **Distribution criteria** will be met when the total number of stable local populations has increased from 125 identified local populations to 133 local populations in 10 of the core areas.
- **Abundance criteria** will be met when the abundance of adult bull trout is between 100 and 5,000 individuals in each of the 10 core areas, a total of 27,200.
- **Trend criteria** will be met when the overall bull trout population trend is accepted as stable in two core areas and increasing in six core areas, based on at least 15 years of monitoring data. Two core areas need additional information before trend criteria can be established.
- **Connectivity criteria** will be met when migratory forms are present in all local populations with intact migratory corridors.

What actions will be necessary to recover bull trout in the Salmon River Recovery Unit?

Among the actions that will be required are: protecting, restoring and maintaining suitable

habitat conditions for bull trout;

identifying and correcting

barriers to migration; and

reducing negative effects of nonnative fishes. For more details, please see the draft Bull Trout Recovery Plan, Salmon River Recovery Unit, Chapter 17.

How long will recovery take?
A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority; therefore it is difficult to determine how long it will take to recover bull trout in the Salmon River Recovery Unit. However, given our best estimate of what government agencies and others might do, it could take three to five bull trout generations (15 to 25 years) or longer before identified threats to the species can be significantly reduced and bull trout can be considered eligible for de-listing.

How much will recovery cost?
Estimating the cost of recovery is difficult and complex, due to many variables and unknowns. However, the Salmon River Recovery Unit team has estimated that recovery could cost about $60 million spread over 25 years. This includes estimates of expenditures by local, Tribal, State and Federal governments and by private business and individuals. The estimates are attributed to bull trout conservation but other aquatic species also will benefit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is soliciting comments from the public on the estimated costs.

How can I obtain copies of the documents?
The documents, along with maps, fact sheets, photographs and other materials may be found on the Pacific Region's website at http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout.

How can I comment?
The Service will be accepting comments, beginning November 29, 2002, on its draft recovery plan for bull trout in the Columbia and Klamath river basins and in the St. Mary-Belly River Basin in Montana. Comments on the draft recovery plan will be accepted for 90 days, until February 27, 2003.

Comments on the draft recovery plan may be mailed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Basin Office, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, ID 83709; faxed to 208-378-5262, or sent via e-mail to: fw1srbocomment@fws.gov

Beginning November 29, 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will accept comments from the public on the agency's proposal to designate critical habitat for the Columbia River and Klamath River distinct population segments of bull trout. Comments will be accepted for 60 days, until January 28, 2003.

Comments on the critical habitat proposal may be submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Office, John Young, Bull Trout Coordinator, 911 N.E. 11th Avenue, Portland Oregon 97232; faxed to 503.231.6243 or e-mailed to: R1bulltroutCH@r1.fws.gov

In addition, a series of public meetings and public hearings will be held in January. Times and locations will be posted on our Bull Trout website at http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout and publicized in local newspapers.

This is only a brief summary.

Please see full draft recovery plan and critical habitat proposal for complete details.